

REMARKS

Summary of Claim Status

Claims 1-10, 12, and 21 are pending in the present application after entry of the present amendment. Applicants have canceled Claim 11, thereby rendering its rejection moot. Claims 1-10 and 12 are rejected for the reasons discussed below. Claim 21 is added.

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of the claims and withdrawal of the pending rejections in view of the present amendment and in light of the following discussion.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claim 10 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112 as being indefinite, the Examiner stating that the recitation of a “delay chain” does not have clear meaning. Applicants respectfully disagree, and submit that one of skill in the art would understand the term “delay chain” as it is used and described in the specification and claims. However, in the interest of advancing prosecution, Applicants voluntarily amend Claim 10 to clarify the term and substitute alternative language. In particular, Claim 10 now recites a “chain of delay elements.” Such amendment is not related to the prior art of record/. Applicants submit that Claim 10, as amended, is not indefinite, and therefore, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-5 and 7-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Watson et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,982,683 (“Watson”). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection with regard to all claims, and submit that Watson does not teach or even suggest the claimed invention. However, the rejection is believed to be moot in light of the amendments made in Claim 1.

Applicants have amended Claim 1 to recite that the first and second switch elements are commonly coupled to receive a control signal, the first switch element coupling the latch circuit to the first voltage supply terminal when the control signal is

in a first state, and the second switch element coupling the latch circuit to the non-volatile memory cell when the control signal is in a second state. Applicants submit that Watson does not teach or even suggest at least this feature.

As shown in Fig. 9B of Watson, transistor 926, alleged to correspond to the first switch element, is controlled by a PULSE signal, and transistor 942, alleged to correspond to the second switch element, is controlled by a SRPROGHV signal. Thus, the two transistors 926 and 942 of Watson are not commonly coupled to receive a control signal. Furthermore, it would not be possible to combining the two control signals in Watson, since they serve different purposes and have different functionality and requirements. As noted in Watson, transistor 926 is pulsed by the PULSE signal to limit the current I_1 , whereas transistor 942 is used in combination with other transistors so that transistor 904 can be turned on without having to go through an erase/program cycle. See Watson at col. 10, lines 51-52, and col. 11, lines 10-22. In particular, the SRPROGHV signal that controls transistor 942 is turned on when TESTEN is enabled, so that a value present at WBL 921 can be latched without using the NVBIT 910. Watson at col. 11, lines 10-22.

Therefore, Applicants believe Claim 1 is allowable over Watson, and allowance of Claim 1 is respectfully requested.

Applicants have made a further minor amendment in Claim 10 to maintain consistency with the amended language in Claim 1. Claims 2-5, 7-10, and 12 depend, from Claim 1, and thus include all of the limitations of Claim 1. Applicants believe Claim 1 is allowable for the reasons set forth above. Therefore, for at least the same reasons, Applicants believe Claims 2-5, 7-10, and 12 are also allowable, and respectfully requests allowance of such claims.

All of the above amendments are fully supported by the specification, for example in Fig. 1 and the corresponding text.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Watson in view of Sansbury, U.S. Patent No. 6,243,296 ("Sansbury"). Applicants

respectfully disagree and traverse the rejection. In particular, Applicants respectfully submit that Watson and Sansbury, alone or in any combination, do not teach or even suggest the features of Claim 6. Furthermore, Claim 6 depends from Claim 1, and is thus believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons Claim 1 is believed to be allowable. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request allowance of Claim 1.

Conclusion

No new matter has been introduced by any of the above amendments. In light of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants believe that Claims 1-10, 12, and 21 are in condition for allowance, and allowance of the application is therefore requested. If action other than allowance is contemplated by the Examiner, the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone Applicants' attorney, Justin Liu, at 408-879-4641.

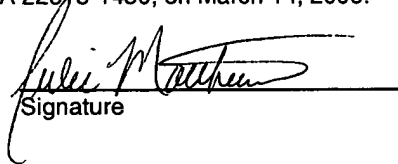
Respectfully submitted,



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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first-class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. BOX 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on March 14, 2006.

Julie Matthews
Name


Signature